

## Waratah Framework: Outcome 5

Prioritising the social, emotional, and physical well-being of students with serious health issues, poor attendance, low self-worth and no confidence, this school aims to intrinsically motivate students by improving their well-being so that they feel valued and are able to engage in school, their culture and build a desire to learn and grow.

### Activities:

Indigenous staff and safe spaces

Koori classes

Language classes and signs

**“You can feel a groundswell of confidence amongst the kids. They’re starting to come out of themselves a little bit more. They’re starting to realize that they do have a significant place.” (Taree Christian College)**

In 2021, the school increased the time allocation for the Indigenous Cultural and Welfare teacher (Uncle) so that he is more available for students when needed. He consults with teachers and arrange support meetings with families who have been identified “at risk”. He also works with students individually. Uncle observed that most students experience an increase in wellbeing as a result of their support. The teaching staff also have greater awareness about the benefits of allowing students to connect with Uncle throughout the day because of the outcomes being achieved.

**“In Maths [student] used to be quiet and shy and seem to not want to ask questions or participate. To now having the confidence to put her hand up and join in. She is wanting to learn and will ask me to sit with her till she fully understands. She is taking great pride in her success and is always grateful.” (parent)**

Students in the focus group, which also included Uncle, displayed an obvious kinship with them and spoke highly of their help and guidance, with one reflecting that *school is fun, but sometimes can be really tough [Uncle] helps with problems.*

Uncle also strengthens relationships with community, family, Elders, both through direct engagement regarding a student as well as through celebrations and events. For example, after an assembly or an awards night there will be a BBQ where the Uncle is available for a yarn. Students like that Uncle and the school gets to know their families. One student commented that Uncle often just asks *how's Mum going and I tell him* commenting that *it's really heartwarming.*

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Indigenous culture was also incorporated into school life, such as through Koori Culture lessons that are held in a dedicated room (not Project funded). Students commented that they play *didjeridu*, feel safe and like dropping in there, even during recess, to yarn with Uncle. One staff member also mentioned how **students feel valued and significant as their history is told.**

**My favourite lesson is Koori Culture. I look forward to that all week. Learn about culture, stories. Also involves games. (student)**

The school also reported that students are “lining up” to learn the Acknowledgement to Country, which is expressed in Language - **they all want to do it.** Further, sports uniforms have Aboriginal design - land, wind, fire, all the elements, which students can now speak in language, and they learn tree names and names of places.

**I like learning the language a lot. I keep on practicing that. I love all the hard words... I teach the other kids. (student)**

These lessons have enabled students to share their cultural knowledge, and staff see students “teaching teachers”, which one student feels is **...really special. It's been a forbidden culture for many years, and I like when others learn it - teachers and students as well. (student)**

Language signs have also been erected around the school to embed cultural learning across the entire student cohort. When asked how students feel about non-Indigenous students learning about Indigenous culture, one student stated **it really touches my heart how they're learning about it,** with another mentioning how much they like when “other kids” try and use it [language] in the playground, e.g., the word for water. One teacher observed that students now seem to **sit up a little straighter when we are speaking of their Culture and their Language.**

With a priority focus on a student's wellbeing, the initiatives that this school have implemented are resulting in progress towards outcomes 1, 4, 6 and 10.

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*“I like learning the language a lot. I keep on practicing that. I love all the hard words... I teach the other kids.” (student)*



## Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' literacy, numeracy, and other academic outcomes at Taree Christian School

### **Purpose**

To improve the learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, close some of the gaps in their abilities and bring them closer to their peers academically by providing intensive support that directly targeted those students who were under performing in literacy and numeracy. The approach was to identify students' abilities through assessment data and teacher direction and employ an aide to provide support to students in class and through withdrawal.

### **Target group**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from K - Year 6 who were identified as under-performing in literacy and/or numeracy (33 students in 2019 and 16 students in 2020).

### **Activities**

The main focus was individual reading and small group reading sessions, as well as supporting students directly during Maths lessons. The Fitzroy reading program was utilised, using leveled texts and follow-up worksheets encompassing comprehension skills, phonics knowledge, writing and fluency in oral reading. In Maths the student support aide guided students through the main body of the lesson and assisted them individually through modified work. Eight students across four classes in Years 3-4 received literacy support for 10 periods per fortnight. One student in Year 2 received one period of support per fortnight. One student in Year 5/6 received five periods per fortnight for individual Maths and literacy support in class. Five students in Stage 2 Maths received individual or group support for three periods per fortnight.

### **Outcomes**

While some students showed limited progress, others made great gains. Overall, there was a greater engagement in day to day learning, particularly amongst Stage 2 students who had extended periods of direct support. Some teachers commented that the targeted students exhibited improved focus and effort in class and increased willingness to complete work and attempt challenging tasks. There were more opportunities to engage with students' families and talk specifically about students' academic work. One unexpected aspect of the project was the encouragingly positive relationships the students developed with the aide. They built a rapport with each other and the students confidently went with her when withdrawn. The aide also developed a deep care for these children and often went above and beyond what she was required to do.

### **Learnings**

We learned the importance of meeting regularly to keep the program operating and adjusted where necessary. We also learned that positive connections and relationships are vital to engagement. Keeping consistent data and track of what is being done/taught is important. Individual reading and discussion times are very helpful. Tips are to meet regularly as a team, focus on a couple of goals and invest in them, and use an evidence folder.

*"Thank you for this awesome update so proud of her doing good!"  
(Parent communication with teacher regarding child's progress)*

*"Time is the keyword. I have seen awesome progress in most of the children I have had consistent time with, despite this time some children are still showing great need." (Teacher's aide)*

*"What I am finding works well is being with the children in their classrooms. Working beside them to understand and work towards completing their classwork, in turn achieving in their day and taking pride in their work. I'm finding now that some of the children are wanting to share their classroom achievements with me. They will ask me to come into their room so they can show what they've achieved on their own, read me a piece of writing they are working on or show me how they've changed their monster on the class dojo because of the points they've earned." (Student support aide)*